

1 July 1957

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director

**SUBJECT: Possible Korean Internal Disorders Over
Succession Issue**

1. US Embassy Seoul reported on 25 June 1957 that the most serious internal political conflict in Korea since the Presidential election crisis of 1952 may develop from a Liberal Party attempt to exclude the Vice-President, Chang Myon, from the line of presidential succession by amending the Constitution.

2. The possibility that disorders in Korea might arise in this way was discussed in SNIE 42.1/2-56, "Probable Political Developments in the Republic of Korea Through 1957" (30 October 1956). We pointed out in this paper that an attempt by Rhee to force through a constitutional amendment to deny the presidency to Chang might cause violent disorders, but we estimated that if violent disorders were to break out, the army would probably intervene to restore order and might assume political control.

3. We believe this estimate is still sound. Many political and military leaders would fear the consequences of violent

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disorders, especially if they were to threaten a collapse of constitutional government. Furthermore, almost all Korean political and military leaders recognize that US support is essential to any ROK regime and believe that the US would view unfavorably any large scale violence resulting from an attempt to force through a constitutional amendment.

4. There is also some likelihood that the constitution will be amended without the accompaniment of violent disorders. The Liberal Party appears to have its strength in hand and may be able to win the necessary two-thirds vote without resorting to extreme pressures on the Democratic Party. In this event, an orderly parliamentary process might occur. We continue to believe (as estimated in SNIE 42.1/2-56) that "on Rhee's death, the succession will be in accordance with constitutional provisions whether or not the constitution has been amended to bar Chang."

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:

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